



**DELHI UNIVERSITY  
LIBRARY**





# ESSENCE OF UNIVERSAL HINDUISM

BY

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

Release for loan



ADVAITA ASHRAMA

Mayavati, Almora, Himalayas

Published by  
**SWAMI PAVITRANANDA**  
**ADVAITA ASHRAMA**  
*Mayavati, Almora, Himalayas*

*All rights reserved*  
**Fourth Edition**  
**1947**

**12 As.**

*Printed in India*  
By D. N. Seal, at  
**Sreekrishna Printing Works**  
**27B, Grey Street, Calcutta**

## PREFACE

Many want to know what Hinduism is. Many are astonished to hear that Hinduism has no particular creed. Indeed Hinduism is hard to define. Hinduism is a system which comprises within its fold an infinite variety of thoughts. In these pages we have made an attempt to give a bird's-eye view of Hinduism with extracts from the speeches and writings of one who may be said to be the best exponent of Hinduism in modern India. The excerpts have been culled from different places, arranged with an eye to the sequence of topics and woven into a systematic whole. We believe they will give some idea of Hinduism to those who have no time to read larger volumes.

PUBLISHER

ADVAITA ASHRAMA  
Mayavati, Himalayas  
11th October, 1937

## CONTENTS

Origin of the word Hindu—The Vedas—Different schools of thought—Vedānta is not the Advaita system only—The Smritis—Other Scriptures—Why different sects—The theory of creation—Brahman—The Law of Karma—The soul—Mukti or Freedom—Life after death—Universalism—Image worship—Guru—Divine Incarnation—Yoga, the means — Raja - Yoga — Karma - Yoga—Bhakti-Yoga—Jnana-Yoga—The Goal.

## .ESSENTIALS OF HINDUISM

### ORIGIN OF THE WORD HINDU

The word Hindu, by which it is the fashion nowadays to style ourselves, has lost all its meaning, for this word merely meant those who lived on the other side of the river Indus (in Sanskrit Sindhu). This name was murdered into Hindu by the ancient Persians, and all people living on the other side of the river Sindhu were called by them Hindus. Thus this word has come down to us, and during the Mohammedan rule we took up the word ourselves. There may not be any harm in using the word, of course, but, as I have said, it has lost its significance, for you may mark that all the people who live on this side of the Indus in modern times do not follow the same religion as they did in ancient times. The word, therefore, covers not only Hindus proper, but Mohammedans, Christians, Jains, and other peoples who live in India. I, therefore, would not use



## ESSENTIALS OF HINDUISM

the word Hindu. What word should we use then? The other words which alone we can use, are either the Vaidiks, followers of the Vedas, or better still, the Vedāntists, followers of the Vedānta.

### THE VEDAS

Most of the great religions of the world owe allegiance to certain books, which they believe are the words of God, or some other supernatural beings, and which are the basis of their religion. Now of all these books, according to the modern *savants* of the West, the oldest are the Vedas of the Hindus. A little understanding, therefore, is necessary about the Vedas. This mass of writing called the Vedas is not the utterance of persons. Its date has never been fixed, can never be fixed, and, according to us, the Vedas are eternal. There is one salient point which I want you to remember, that all the other religions of the world claim their authority as being delivered by a Personal God or a number of personal beings, angels, or special messengers of God, unto certain persons; while the claim of the Hindus is, that the Vedas do not owe

## ESSENTIALS OF HINDUISM

their authority to anybody, they are themselves the authority, being eternal—the knowledge of God. They are never written, never created, they have existed throughout time ; just as creation is infinite and eternal, without beginning and without end, so is the knowledge of God, without beginning and without end. And this knowledge is what is meant by the Vedas (*Vid* to know). The mass of knowledge called the Vedanta was discovered by personages called Rishis, and the Rishi is defined as a Mantra Drashtā, a seer of thought ; not that the thought was his own. Whenever you hear that a certain passage of the Vedas came from a certain Rishi, never think that he wrote it, or created it out of his mind ; he was the seer of the thought which already existed ; it existed in the universe eternally. This sage was the discoverer ; the Rishis were spiritual discoverers.

This mass of writing, the Vedas, is divided principally into two parts, the Karma Kānda and the Jñāna Kānda—the work portion and the knowledge portion, the ceremonial and the spiritual. The

work portion consists of various sacrifices ; most of them of late have been given up as not practicable under present circumstances ; but others remain to the present day in some shape or other. The main ideas of the Karma Kanda, which consists of the duties of man, the duties of the student, of the householder, of the recluse, and the various duties of the different stations of life, are followed, more or less, down to the present day. But the spiritual portion of our religion is in the second part, the Jñāna Kanda, the Vedānta, the end of the Vedas, the gist, the goal of the Vedas. The essence of the knowledge of the Vedas was called by the name of the Vedānta, which comprises the Upanishads ; and all the sects of India, Dualists, Qualified-Monists, Monists, or the Saivites, Vaishnavites, Śāktas, Sauras, Gāṇapatyas—each one that dares to come within the fold of Hinduism, must acknowledge the Upanishads of the Vedas. They can have their own interpretations, and can interpret them in their own way, but they must obey the authority. That is why we want to use

the word Vedantists instead of Hindu. All the philosophers of India who are orthodox have to acknowledge the authority of the Vedanta and all our present-day religions, however crude some of them may appear to be, however inexplicable some of their purposes may seem, one who understands them, and studies them, can trace them back to the ideas of the Upanishads. So deeply have these Upanishads sunk into our race, that those of you who study the symbology of the crudest religion of the Hindus, will be astonished to find sometimes figurative expressions of the Upanishads—the Upanishads become symbolised after a time into figures and so forth. Great spiritual and philosophical ideas in the Upanishads are to-day with us, converted into household worship in the form of symbols. Thus the various symbols now used by us, all come from the Vedanta, because in the Vedanta they are used as figures, and these ideas spread among the nation and permeated it throughout, until they became part of their everyday life, as symbols.

## ESSENTIALS OF HINDUISM

### DIFFERENT SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

The sects that are at the present time in India, come to be divided in general into the two great classes of Dualists and Monists. The little differences which some of these sects insist upon, and upon the authority of which want to take new names, as pure Advaitists, or Qualified Advaitists, and so forth, do not matter much. As a classification, either they are Dualists or Monists, and of the sects existing at the present time, some of them are very new, and others seem to be reproductions of very ancient sects. The one class I would present by the life and philosophy of Rāmānuja, and the other, by Sankarāchārya. Rāmānuja is the leading dualistic philosopher of later India, whom all the other dualistic sects have followed, directly or indirectly, both in the substance of their teaching, and in the organisation of their sects, even down to some of the most minute points of their organisation. You will be astonished, if you compare Ramanuja and his work with the other dualistic Vaishnava sects in India, to see how much they resemble each other in

organisation, teaching and method. There is the great Southern preacher Madhva Muni, and following him, the great Chaitanya of Bengal, who took up the philosophy of the Madhvas, and preached it in Bengal. There are some other sects also in Southern India, as the qualified dualistic Saivas. The Saivas in most parts of India are Advaitists, except in some portions of Southern India, and in Ceylon. But they also only substitute Siva for Vishnu, and are Ramanujists in every sense of the term except in the doctrine of the soul. The followers of Ramanuja hold that the soul is Anu, like a particle, very small, and the followers of Sankaracharya hold that it is Vibhu, omnipresent. There have been several non-dualistic sects. It seems that there have been sects in ancient times which Sankara's movement has entirely swallowed up and assimilated.

According to Ramanuja these three entities are eternal—God, and soul, and Nature. The souls are eternal, and they will remain eternally existing, individualised through eternity, and will retain their individuality all through. Your soul will.

## DIFFERENT SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

The sects that are at the present time in India, come to be divided in general into the two great classes of Dualists and Monists. The little differences which some of these sects insist upon, and upon the authority of which want to take new names, as pure Advaitists, or Qualified Advaitists, and so forth, do not matter much. As a classification, either they are Dualists or Monists, and of the sects existing at the present time, some of them are very new, and others seem to be reproductions of very ancient sects. The one class I would present by the life and philosophy of Rāmaṇuja, and the other, by Sankarāchārya. Rāmaṇuja is the leading dualistic philosopher of later India, whom all the other dualistic sects have followed, directly or indirectly, both in the substance of their teaching, and in the organisation of their sects, even down to some of the most minute points of their organisation. You will be astonished, if you compare Rāmaṇuja and his work with the other dualistic Vaishnava sects in India, to see how much they resemble each other in

organisation, teaching and method. There is the great Southern preacher Mādhva Muni, and following him, the great Chaitanya of Bengal, who took up the philosophy of the Mādhvas, and preached it in Bengal. There are some other sects also in Southern India, as the qualified dualistic Saivas. The Saivas in most parts of India are Advaitists, except in some portions of Southern India, and in Ceylon. But they also only substitute Siva for Vishnu, and are Ramanujists in every sense of the term except in the doctrine of the soul. The followers of Ramanuja hold that the soul is Anu, like a particle, very small, and the followers of Sankaracharya hold that it is Vibhu, omnipresent. There have been several non-dualistic sects. It seems that there have been sects in ancient times which Sankara's movement has entirely swallowed up and assimilated.

According to Ramanuja these three entities are eternal—God, and soul, and Nature. The souls are eternal, and they will remain eternally existing, individualised through eternity, and will retain their individuality all through. Your soul will



be different from my soul through all eternity, says Ramanuja, and so will this Nature, which is an existing fact, as much a fact as the existence of soul, or the existence of God, remain always different. And God is interpenetrating, the essence of the soul. He is the Antaryām in ; in this sense Ramanuja sometimes thinks that God is one with the soul, the essence of the soul, and these souls—at the time of Pralaya, when the whole of Nature becomes what he calls *sankuchita*, contracted,—become contracted and minute and remain so for a time. And at the beginning of the next cycle they all come out, according to their past Karma, and undergo the effect of that Karma. Every action that makes the natural inborn purity and perfection of the soul get contracted, is a bad action, and every action that makes it come out and expand itself, is a good action, says Ramanuja. Whatever helps to make the *vikāśa* of the soul is good, and whatever makes it *sankuchita* is bad. And thus the soul is going on, expanding or contracting in its actions, till, through the grace of God, comes salvation. And that grace comes to all souls, says Ramanuja,

## ESSENTIALS OF HINDUISM

that are pure, and struggle for that grace.

According to the dualistic sects of India, the individual souls remain as individuals throughout, and God creates the universe out of pre-existing material, only as the efficient cause. According to the Advaitists, on the other hand, God is both the material and the efficient cause of the universe. He is not only the Creator of the Universe, but He creates it out of Himself. That is the Advaitist position. There are crude dualistic sects who believe that this world has been created by God out of Himself, and at the same time God is eternally separate from the universe, and everything is eternally subordinate to the Ruler of the Universe. There are sects too who also believe that out of Himself God has evolved this universe, and individuals in the long run attain to Nirvāṇa, to give up the finite and become the Infinite. But these sects have disappeared. The one sect of Advaitists that you see in modern India is composed of the followers of Sankara. According to Sankara, God is both the material and the efficient cause, through *Māyā*, but not in

## ESSENTIALS OF HINDUISM

reality. God has not become this universe, but the universe is not, and God is. This is one of the highest points to understand of Advaita Vedanta, this idea of Maya.

**VEDANTA IS NOT THE ADVAITA SYSTEM ONLY.**

Unfortunately there is the mistaken notion in modern India, that the word Vedanta has reference only to the Advaita system, but you must always remember that in modern India, the three Prasthānas are considered equally important in the study of all the systems of religion. First of all there are the Revelations, the Srutis, by which I mean the Upanishads. Secondly, among our philosophies, the Sutras of Vyāsa have the greatest prominence, on account of their being the consummation of all the preceding systems of philosophy. These systems are not contradictory to one another, but one is based on another, and there is a gradual unfolding of the theme which culminates in the Sutras of Vyāsa. Then, between the Upanishads and the Sutras, which are the systematising of the marvellous truths of the Vedanta, comes in Sri Gītā, the divine commentary on the

## ESSENTIALS OF HINDUISM

Vedanta. The Upanishads, the Vyasa Sutras, and the Gita, therefore, have been taken up by every sect in India that wants to claim authority for orthodoxy, whether Dualist, or Visishtadvaitist, or Advaitist; the authorities of each of these are the three Prasthans. We find that a Sankaracharya, or a Ramanuja, or a Madhvacharya, or a Vallabhacharya, or a Chaitanya—any one who wanted to propound a new sect—had to take up these three systems and write only a new commentary on them. Therefore it would be wrong to confine the word Vedanta only to one system, which has arisen out of the Upanishads. All these are covered by the word Vedanta. The Visishtadvaitist has as much right to be called a Vedantist as the Advaitist; in fact I will go a little further and say that what we really mean by the word Hindu is really the same as Vedantist.

### THE SMRITIS

Next to the Vedanta come the Smritis. These also are books written by sages, but the authority of the Smritis is subordinate to that of the Vedanta, because they stand

in the same relation with us, as the Scriptures of the other religions stand with regard to them. We admit that the Smritis have been written by particular sages ; in that sense they are the same as the Scriptures of other religions, but these Smritis are not the final authority. If there is anything in a Smriti which contradicts the Vedanta, the Smriti is to be rejected ; its authority is gone. These Smritis, we see again, have varied from time to time. We read that such and such Smriti should have authority in the Satya Yuga, such and such in the Tretā Yuga, some in the Dwāpara Yuga, and some in the Kali Yuga, and so on. As essential conditions changed, as various circumstances came to have their influence on the race, manners and customs had to be changed, and these Smritis, as mainly regulating the manners and customs of the nation, had also to be changed from time to time. This is a point I specially ask you to remember. The principles of religion that are in the Vedanta are unchangeable. Why ? Because they are all built upon the eternal principles that are in man and nature ; they can never change. Ideas

## ESSENTIALS OF HINDUISM

about the soul, going to heaven, and so on, can never change ; they were the same thousands of years ago, they are the same to-day, they will be the same millions of years hence. But those religious practices which are based entirely upon our social position and correlation, must change with the changes in society. Such an order, therefore, would be good and true at a certain period and not at another. We find accordingly that a certain food is allowed at one time and not at another, because the food was suitable for that time ; but climate and other things changed, various other circumstances required to be met, so the Smṛiti changed the food and other things. Thus it naturally follows, that if in modern times our society requires changes to be made, they must be met, and sages will come and show us the way how to meet them ; but not one jot of the principles of our religion will be changed ; they will remain intact.

### OTHER SCRIPTURES

Then there are the Purāṇas. "Puranam Panchalakshanam" which means, the Puranas are of five characteristics,—that which

## ESSENTIALS OF HINDUISM

treats of history, of cosmology, with various symbolical illustration of philosophical principles and so forth. These were written to popularise the religion of the Vedas. The language in which the Vedas are written is very ancient, and even among scholars very few can trace the date of these books. The Puranas were written in the language of the people of that time, what we call modern Sanskrit. They were then meant, not for scholars but for the ordinary people ; and ordinary people cannot understand philosophy. Such things were given unto them in concrete form, by means of the lives of saints and kings and great men, and historical events that happened to the race etc. The sages made use of these things, to illustrate the eternal principles of religion.

There are still other books, the Tantras. These are very much like Puranas in some respects, and in some of them there is an attempt to revive the old sacrificial ideas of the Karma Kanda,

### WHY DIFFERENT SECTS ?

All these books constitute the Scriptures of the Hindus. When there is such a mass

of sacred books in a nation and in a race, which has devoted the greatest part of its energies to the thought of philosophy and spirituality (nobody knows for how many thousands of years), it is quite natural that there should be so many sects ; indeed, it is a wonder that there are not thousands more. These sects differ very much from each other in certain points. We shall not have time to understand the differences between these sects, and all the spiritual details about them ; therefore I shall take up the common grounds, the essential principles of all these sects which every Hindu must believe.

## THE THEORY OF CREATION

The first is the question of creation, that this Nature, Prakriti, Maya, is infinite without beginning. It is not that this world was created the other day, not that a God came and created the world, and since that time has been sleeping ; for that cannot be. The creative energy is still going on. God is eternally creating—is never at rest. Remember the passage in the Gita where Krishna says : “If I remain at rest for one moment this universe will be destroyed.” If that



creative energy which is working all around us, day and night, stops for a second, the whole thing falls to the ground. There never was a time when that energy did not work throughout the universe, but there is the law of cycles, Pralaya. Our Sanskrit word for creation properly translated, should be *projection*, and not *creation*. For the word creation in the English language has unhappily got that fearful, that most crude idea of something coming out of nothing, creation out of nonentity, non-existence becoming existence, which, of course, I could not insult you by asking you to believe. Our word, therefore, is *projection*. The whole of this nature exists, it becomes finer, subsides and then after a period or rest, as it were, the whole thing is again projected forward, and the same combination, the same evolution, the same manifestations appear, and remain playing, as it were, for a certain time, only again to break into pieces, to become finer and finer, until the whole thing subsides, and again comes out. Thus it goes on backwards and forwards, with a wavelike motion throughout eternity. Time, space and causation are all

within this Nature. To say, therefore, that it had a beginning, is utter nonsense. No question can occur as to its beginning, or its end. Therefore, wherever in our Scriptures the words beginning and end are used, you must remember that it means the beginning and the end of one particular cycle ; no more than that.

## BRAHMAN

What makes this creation ? God. What do I mean by the use of the English word, God ? Certainly not the word as ordinarily used in English ; a good deal of difference. There is no other suitable word in English. I would rather confine myself to the Sanskrit word, Brahman. He is the general cause of all these manifestations. What is this Brahman ? He is eternal, eternally pure, eternally awake, the almighty, the all-knowing, the all-merciful, the omnipresent, the formless, the partless. He creates this universe. If He is always creating and holding up this universe, two difficulties arise. We see that there is partiality in the universe. One person is born happy, and another unhappy ; one is rich

and another is poor ; this shows partiality. Then, there is cruelty also, for here the very condition of life is death. One animal tears another to pieces, and every man tries to get the better of his own brother. This competition, cruelty, horror, and sighs rending hearts day and night, is the state of things in this world of ours. If this be the creation of a God, that God is worse than cruel, worse than any devil that man ever imagined. Ay ! says the Vedanta, it is not the fault of God that this partiality exists, that this competition exists. Who makes it ? We ourselves. There is a cloud shedding its rain on all fields alike. But it is only the field that is well-cultivated, which gets the advantage of the shower ; another field, which has not been tilled or taken care of, cannot get that advantage. It is not the fault of the cloud. 'The mercy of God is eternal and unchangeable ; it is we that make the differentiation.' But how can this difference of some being born happy and some unhappy be explained ? They do nothing to make that difference ! Not in this life, but they did in their last birth, and the difference is

## ESSENTIALS OF HINDUISM

explained by this action in the previous life.

### THE LAW OF KARMA

We now come to the second principle on which we all agree, not only all Hindus, but all Buddhists, and all Jains. We all agree that life is eternal. It is not that it has sprung out of nothing, for that cannot be. Such a life would not be worth having. Everything that has a beginning in time must end in time. If life began but yesterday, it must end to-morrow, and annihilation is the result. Life must have been existing. It does not now require much acumen to see that, for all the sciences of modern times have been coming round to our help, illustrating from the material world the principles embodied in our Scriptures. You know it already, that each one of us is the effect of the infinite past ; the child is ushered into the world, not as something flashing from the hands of nature, as poets delight so much to depict, but he has the burden of an infinite past ; for good or evil he comes to work out his own past deeds. That makes the differentiation. This is the law of

## ESSENTIALS OF HINDUISM

Karma. Each one of us is the maker of his own fate. This law knocks on the head at once all doctrines of predestination and fate, and gives us the only means of reconciliation between God and man. We, we, and none else, are responsible for what we suffer. We are the effects, and we are the causes. We are free therefore. If I am unhappy, it has been of my own making, and that very thing shows that I can be happy if I will. If I am impure, that is also of my own making, and that very thing shows that I can be pure if I will. The human will stands beyond all circumstances. Before it, the strong, gigantic, infinite will and freedom in man, all the powers, even of nature, must bow down, succumb, and become its servants. This is the result of the law of Karma.

### THE SOUL

The next question, of course, naturally would be, what is the soul? We cannot understand God in our Scriptures without knowing the soul. There have been attempts in India, and outside of India too, to catch

a glimpse of the beyond by studying external nature, and we all know what an awful failure has been the result. Instead of giving us a glimpse of the beyond, the more we study the material world the more we tend to become materialised. The more we handle the material world, even the little spirituality which we possessed before, vanishes. Therefore, that is not the way to spirituality, to knowledge of the Highest ; but it must come through the heart, the human soul. The external workings do not teach us anything about the beyond, about the Infinite, it is only the internal that can do so. Through soul, therefore, the analysis of the human soul alone, can we understand God. There are differences of opinion as to the nature of the human soul among the various sects in India, but there are certain points of agreement. We all agree, that souls are without beginning and without end, and immortal by their very nature ; also, that all powers, blessing, purity, omnipresence, omniscience are buried in each soul. That is a grand idea we ought to remember. In every man and in every animal, however weak or wicked,

great or small, resides the same omnipresent, omniscient soul. The difference is not in the soul, but in the manifestation. Between me and the smallest animal, the difference is only in manifestation, but as a principle he is the same as I am, he is my brother, he has the same soul as I have. This is the greatest principle that India has preached. The talk of the brotherhood of man becomes in India the brotherhood of universal life, of animals, and of all life down to the little ants,—all these are our bodies. Even as our Scripture says, "Thus the sage, knowing that the same Lord inhabits all bodies, will worship every body as such." That is why in India there have been such merciful ideas about the poor, about animals, about everybody and everything else. This is one of the common grounds about our ideas of the soul.

Naturally we come to the idea of God. One thing more about the soul. Those who study the English language are often deluded by the words, soul and mind. Our Atman and soul are entirely different things. What we call Manas, the mind, the Western people call soul. The West never had

the idea of soul until they got it through Sanskrit philosophy, some twenty years ago. The body is here, beyond that is the mind, yet the mind is not the Atman ; it is the fine body, the Sukshma Sarira,—made of fine particles, which goes from birth to death, and so on ; but behind the mind is the Atman, the soul, the Self of man. It cannot be translated by the word soul or mind, so we have to use the word Atman, or as Western philosophers have designated it by the word, Self. Whatever word you use, you must keep it clear in your mind, that the Atman is separate from the mind, as well as from the body, and that this Atman goes through birth and death, accompanied by the mind—the Sukshma Sarira. And when the time comes that it has attained to all knowledge, and manifested itself to perfection, then this going from birth to death ceases for it. Then it is at liberty either to keep that mind, or the Sukshma Sarira, or to let it go for ever, and remain independent and free throughout all eternity. The goal of the soul is freedom. That is no peculiarity of our religion. We also have heavens, and



hells too, but these are not infinite for in the very nature of things they cannot be. If there were any heavens, they would be only repetitions of this world of ours on a bigger scale, with a little more happiness, and a little more enjoyment, but that is all the worse for the soul. There are many of these heavens. Persons who do good works here with the thought of reward, when they die, are born again as gods in one of these heavens, as Indra and others. These gods are the names of certain states. They also had been men, and by good work they have become gods, and those different names that you read of, such as Indra, and so on, are not the names of the same person. There will be thousands of Indras. Nahusha was a great king, and when he died he became Indra. It is a position ; one soul becomes high and takes the Indra position, and remains in it only a certain time ; he then dies and is born again as man. But the human body is the highest of all. Some of the gods may try to go higher and give up all ideas of enjoyment in heavens, but, as in this world, wealth and position and enjoyment delude

the vast majority, so do most of the gods become deluded also, and after working out their good Karma, they fall down and become human beings again. This earth, therefore, is the Karma Bhumi ; it is this earth from which we attain to liberation. So, even these heavens are not worth attaining to. What is then worth having ? Mukti, freedom. Even in the highest of heavens, says our Scripture, you are a slave ; what matters it if you are a king for twenty thousand years ? So long as you have a body, so long as you are a slave to happiness, so long as time works on you, space works on you, you are a slave. The idea, therefore, is to be free of external and internal nature. Nature must fall at your feet, and you must trample on it, and be free and glorious, by going beyond. No more is there life, therefore, no more is there death ; no more enjoyment, therefore, no more misery. It is bliss unspeakable, indestructible, beyond everything. What we call happiness and good here, are but particles of that eternal Bliss. And this eternal Bliss is our goal.

MUKTI OR FREEDOM

The soul is also sexless ; we cannot say of the Atman that it is a man or a woman. Sex belongs to the body alone. All such ideas, therefore, as man or woman, are a delusion when spoken with regard to the Self, and are only proper when spoken of the body. So are the ideas of age. It never ages ; the ancient One is always the same. How did It come down to earth ? There is but one answer to that in our Scriptures. Ignorance is the cause of all this bondage. It is through ignorance that we have become bound ; knowledge will cure it, by taking us to the other side. How will that knowledge come ? Through love, Bhakti. By the worship of God, by loving all beings as the temples of God ; He resides within them. Thus, with that intense love will come knowledge, and ignorance will disappear, the bonds will break, and the soul will be free. There are two ideas of God in our Scriptures ; the one, the personal, and the other, the impersonal. The idea of the Personal God is, that He is the omnipresent creator, preserver, and destroyer of every-

thing, the eternal Father and Mother of the universe, but One who is eternally separate from us and from all souls ; and liberation consists in coming near to Him and living in Him. Then there is the other idea of the Impersonal, where all those adjectives are taken away as superfluous, as illogical, and there remains an impersonal, omnipresent Being who cannot be called a knowing being because knowledge only belongs to the human mind. He cannot be called a thinking being, because that is a process of the weak only. He cannot be called a reasoning being, because reasoning is a sign of weakness. He cannot be called a creating being, because none creates except in bondage. What bondage has He ? None works except for the fulfilment of desires ; what desires has He ? None works except it be to supply some wants ; what wants has He ? In the Vedas it is not the word "He" that is used, but "It," for "He" would make an invidious distinction, as if God were a man. "It," the impersonal, is used, and this impersonal "It" is preached. This system is called the Advaita.

## ESSENTIALS OF HINDUISM

### LIFE AFTER DEATH

When a man dies, who has by meditation purified himself, and got knowledge, he first goes to light, then from light to day, from day to the light half of the moon, from that to the six months when the sun goes to the north, from that to the year, from the year to the sun, from the sun to the moon, from the moon to the lightning, and when he comes to the sphere of lightning he meets a person who is not human, and that person leads him to (the conditioned) Brahman. This is the way of the gods. When sages and wise persons die they go that way and they do not return. What is meant by this month and year, and all these things, no one understands clearly. Each one gives his own meaning, and some say it is all nonsense. What is meant by going to the world of the moon, and of the sun, and this person who comes to help the soul after it has reached the sphere of lightning, no one knows. There is an idea among the Hindus that the moon is a place where life exists, and we shall see how life has come from there. Those that have not attained

## ESSENTIALS OF HINDUISM

to knowledge, but have done good work in this life, when they die, first go through smoke, then to night, then to the dark fifteen days, then to the six months when the sun goes to the south, and from that they go to the region of their forefathers, then to ether, then to the region of the moon, and there become the food of the gods, and later, are born as gods and live there so long as their good works will permit. And when the effect of the good work has been finished they come back to earth by the same route. They first become ether, and then air, and then smoke, and then mist, then cloud, and then fall upon the earth as raindrops ; then they get into food, which is eaten up by human beings, and finally become their children. Those whose works have been very good take birth in good families, and those whose works have been bad take bad births, even in animal bodies. Again, small animals are continually coming to and going from this earth. That is why the earth is neither full, nor empty.

The last part which deals with how those who have been in heaven return, is clearer perhaps than the first part, but

## ESSENTIALS OF HINDUISM

the whole idea seems to be this, that there is no permanent heaven without realising God. Now some people who have not realised God, but have done good work in this world, with the view of enjoying the results, when they die, go through this and that place, until they reach heaven, and there they are born in the same way as we are here, as children of the gods, and they live there as long as their good works will permit. Out of this comes one basic idea of the Vedanta, that everything which has name and form is transient. This earth is transient, because it has name and form, and so the heavens must be transient, because there also name and form remain. A heaven which is eternal would be a contradiction in terms, because everything that has name and form must begin in time, exist in time, and end in time. These are settled doctrines of the Vedanta, and as such the heavens are given up.

### UNIVERSALISM

From the high spiritual flights of the Vedanta philosophy, of which the latest discoveries of science seem like echoes, to

the low ideas of idolatry with its multifarious mythology, the agnosticism of the Buddhists and the atheism of the Jains, each and all have a place in the Hindu's religion. To the Hindu, then, the whole world of religions is only a travelling, a coming up, of different men and women, through various conditions and circumstances, to the same goal. Every religion is only evolving a God out of the material man, and the same God is the inspirer of all of them. Why, then, are there so many contradictions? They are only apparent, says the Hindu. The contradictions come from the same truth adapting itself to the varying circumstances of different natures.

It is the same light coming through glasses of different colours. And these little variations are necessary for purposes of adaptation. But in the heart of everything the same truth reigns. The Lord has declared to the Hindu in His incarnation as Krishna, "I am in every religion as the thread through a string of pearls. Wherever thou seest extraordinary holiness and extraordinary power raising and purifying humanity, know thou that I am there." And what has been the result? I



challenge the world to find, throughout the whole system of Sanskrit philosophy, any such expression as that the Hindu alone will be saved and not others. Says Vyasa, "we find perfect men even beyond the pale of our caste and creed." How, then, can the Hindu, whose whole fabric of thought centres in God, believe in Buddhism which is agnostic, or in Jainism which is atheistic ?

The Buddhists or the Jains do not depend upon God ; but the whole force of their religion is directed to the great central truth in every religion, to evolve a God out of man. They have not seen the Father, but they have seen the Son. And he that hath seen the Son hath seen the Father also.

## IMAGE WORSHIP

Descend we now from the aspirations of philosophy to the religion of the ignorant. At the very outset, I may tell you that there is no *polytheism* in India. In every temple, if one stands by and listens, one will find the worshippers applying all the attributes of God, including omnipresence, to the images. It is not polytheism, nor would

the name henotheism explain the situation. "The rose called by any other name would smell as sweet." Names are not explanations.

I remember, as a boy, hearing a Christian missionary preach to a crowd in India. Among other sweet things he was telling them was, that if he gave a blow to their idol with his stick, what could it do? One of his hearers sharply answered, "If I abuse your God, what can He do?" "You would be punished," said the preacher, "when you die." "So my idol will punish you when you die," retorted the Hindu.

The tree is known by its fruits. When I have seen amongst them that are called idolaters, men, the like of whom in morality and spirituality and love, I have never seen anywhere, I stop and ask myself, "Can sin beget holiness?"

Superstition is a great enemy of man, but bigotry is worse. Why does a Christian go to church? Why is the Cross holy? Why is the face turned towards the sky in prayer? Why are there so many images in the Catholic Church? Why are there

## ESSENTIALS OF HINDUISM

so many images in the minds of Protestants when they pray? My brethren, we can no more think about anything without a mental image than we can live without breathing. By the law of association the material image calls up the mental idea and *vice versa*. This is why the Hindu uses an external symbol when he worships. He will tell you, it helps to keep his mind fixed on the Being to whom he prays. He knows as well as you do that the image is not God, is not omnipresent. After all how much does omnipresence mean to almost the whole world? It stands merely as a word, a symbol. Has God superficial area? If not, when we repeat that word 'omnipresent,' we think of the extended sky or of space, that is all.

As we find that somehow or other, by the laws of our mental constitution, we have to associate our ideas of infinity with the image of the blue sky, or of the sea, so we naturally connect our idea of holiness with the image of a church, a mosque or a cross. The Hindus have associated the ideas of holiness, purity, truth, omnipresence, and such other ideas with different

images and forms. But with this difference that while some people devote their whole lives to their idol of a church and never rise higher, because with them religion means an intellectual assent to certain doctrines and doing good to their fellows, the whole religion of the Hindu is centred in realisation. Man is to become divine by realising the divine ; idols or temples or churches or books are only the supports, the helps, of his spiritual childhood ; but on and on he must progress.

He must not stop anywhere. "External worship, material worship," say the Vedas, "is the lowest stage ; struggling to rise high, mental prayer is the next stage, but the highest stage is when the Lord has been realised." Mark, the same earnest man who is kneeling before the idol tells you : "Him the sun cannot express, nor the moon, nor the stars, the lightning cannot express Him, nor what we speak of as fire ; through Him they shine." But he does not abuse any one's idol or call its worship sin. He recognises in it a necessary stage of life. "The child is father of the man." Would it be right for an old man to

say that childhood is a sin or youth a sin ?

If a man can realise his divine nature with the help of an image, would it be right to call that a sin ? Nor, even when he has passed that stage, should he call it an error ? To the Hindu, man is not travelling from error to truth, but from truth to truth, from lower to higher truth. To him all the religions, from the lowest fetichism to the highest absolutism, mean so many attempts of the human soul to grasp and realise the Infinite, each determined by the conditions of its birth and association, and each of these marks a stage of progress ; and every soul is a young eagle soaring higher and higher, gathering more and more strength till it reaches the Glorious Sun.

Unity in variety is the plan of nature, and the Hindu has recognised it. Every other religion lays down certain fixed dogmas, and tries to force society to adopt them. It places before society only one coat which must fit Jack and John and Henry, all alike. If it does not fit John or Henry, he must go without a coat to cover

his body. The Hindus have discovered that the absolute can only be realised, or thought of, or stated, through the relative, and the images, crosses and crescents are simply so many symbols,—so many pegs to hang the spiritual ideas on. It is not that this help is necessary for every one, but those that do not need it have no right to say that it is wrong. Nor is it compulsory in Hinduism.

### GURU

Every soul is destined to be perfect, and every being, in the end, will attain the state of perfection. Whatever we are now, is the result of our acts and thoughts in the past ; and whatever we shall be in the future, will be the result of what we think and do now. But this, the shaping of our own destinies, does not preclude our receiving help from outside ; nay, in the vast majority of cases such help is absolutely necessary. When it comes, the higher powers and possibilities of the soul are quickened, spiritual life is awakened, growth is animated, and man becomes holy and perfect in the end.

This quickening impulse cannot be derived from books. The soul can receive

impulses from another soul, and from nothing else. We may study books all our lives, we may become very intellectual, but in the end, we find that we have not developed at all spiritually. It is not true that a high order of intellectual development always goes hand in hand with a proportionate development of the spiritual side in man. In studying books we are sometimes deluded into thinking that thereby we are being spiritually helped ; but, if we analyse the effect of the study of books on ourselves, we shall find that, at the utmost, it is only our intellect that derives profit from such studies, and not our inner spirit. This inadequacy of books to quicken spiritual growth is the reason why, although almost every one of us can *speak* most wonderfully on spiritual matters, when it comes to action and the living of a truly spiritual life, we find ourselves so awfully deficient. To quicken the spirit, the impulse *must* come from another soul.

The person from whose soul such impulse comes is called the Guru—the teacher ; and the person to whose soul the impulse is conveyed is called the Sishya—the

student. To convey such an impulse to any soul, in the first place, the soul from which it proceeds must possess the power of transmitting it, as it were, to another ; and, in the second place, the soul to which it is transmitted must be fit to receive it. The seed must be a living seed, and the field must be ready ploughed ; and when both those conditions are fulfilled, a wonderful growth of genuine religion takes place. "The true preacher of religion has to be of wonderful capabilities, and clever shall his hearer be"—  
 आचार्यो वक्ता कुशलोऽस्य श्रद्धा and when both of these are really wonderful and extraordinary, then will a splendid spiritual awakening result, and not otherwise. Such alone are the real teachers, and such alone are also the real students, the real aspirants. All others are only playing with spirituality. They have just a little curiosity awakened, just a little intellectual aspiration kindled in them, but are merely standing on the outward fringe of the horizon of religion. There is, no doubt, some value even in that, as it may, in the course of time, result in the awakening of a real thirst for religion ; and it is a mysterious law of nature that, as



## ESSENTIALS OF HINDUISM

soon as the field is ready, the seed *must* and does come, as soon as the soul earnestly desires to have religion, the transmitter of the religious force *must* and does appear to help that soul. When the power that attracts the light of religion in the receiving soul, is full and strong, the power which answers to that attraction and sends in light, does come as a matter of course.

### DIVINE INCARNATION

Higher and nobler than all ordinary ones, are another set of teachers, the Avatars of Isvara, in the world. They can transmit spirituality with a touch, even with a mere wish. The lowest and the most degraded characters become in one second saints at their command. They are the Teachers of all teachers, the highest manifestations of God through man. We cannot see God except through them. We cannot help worshipping them ; and indeed they are the only ones whom we are bound to worship.

No man can really see God except through these human manifestations. If we try to see God otherwise, we make for ourselves a hideous caricature of Him, and

believe the caricature to be no worse than the original. There is a story of an ignorant man who was asked to make an image of the God Siva, and who, after days of hard struggle, manufactured only the image of a monkey. So, whenever we try to think of God as He is in His absolute perfection, we invariably meet with the most miserable failure ; because as long as we are men, we cannot conceive Him as anything higher than man. The time will come when we shall transcend our human nature, and know Him as He is ; but as long as we are men we must worship Him in man and as man. Talk as you may, try as you may, you cannot think of God except as a man. You may deliver great intellectual discourses on God and all things under the sun, become great rationalists and prove to your satisfaction that all these accounts of the Avataras of God as man, are nonsense. But let us come for a moment to practical common sense. What is there behind this kind of remarkable intellect ? Zero, nothing, simply so much froth. When next you hear a man delivering a great intellectual lecture against this

worship of the Avataras of God, get hold of him and ask him what his idea of God is, what he understands by "omnipotence", "omnipresence", and all similar terms, beyond the spelling of the words. He really means nothing by them ; he cannot formulate as their meaning any idea unaffected by his own human nature ; he is no better off in this matter than the man in the street who has not read a single book. That man in the street, however, is quiet and does not disturb the peace of the world ; while this big talker creates disturbance and misery among mankind. Religion is, after all, realisation, and we must make the sharpest distinction between talk and intuitive experience. What we experience in the depths of our souls is realisation. Nothing indeed is so uncommon as common sense in regard to this matter.

By our present constitution we are limited and bound to see God as man. If, for instance, the buffaloes want to worship God, they will, in keeping with their own nature, see Him as a huge buffalo ; if a fish wants to worship God, it will have to form an idea of Him as a big fish ; and man has

to think of Him as man. And these various conceptions are not due to morbidly active imagination. Man, the buffalo, and the fish, all may be supposed to represent so many different vessels, so to say. All these vessels go to the sea of God to get filled with water, each according to its own shape and capacity ; in the man, the water takes the shape of man, in the buffalo, the shape of a buffalo, and in the fish, the shape of a fish. In each of these vessels there is the same water of the sea of God. When men see Him, they see Him as man, and the animals, if they have any conception of God at all, must see Him as animal, each according to its own ideal. So we cannot help seeing God as man, and, therefore, we are bound to worship Him as man. There is no other way.

Two kinds of men do not worship God as man—the human brute who has no religion, and the Paramahansa who has risen beyond all the weaknesses of humanity and has transcended the limits of his own human nature. To him all nature has become his own Self. He alone can worship God as He is. Here too, as in all other

cases, the two extremes meet. The extreme of ignorance and the other extreme of knowledge—neither of these go through acts of worship. The human brute does not worship because of his ignorance, and the Jivanmuktas (free souls) do not worship because they have realised God in themselves. Being between these two poles of existence, if any one tells you that he is not going to worship God as man, take kindly care of that man ; he is, not to use any harsher term, an irresponsible talker ; his religion is for unsound and empty brains.

God understands human failings and becomes man to do good to humanity.

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत ।

अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥

परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम् ।

धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय संभवामि युगे युगे ॥

“Whenever virtue subsides and wickedness prevails I manifest myself. To establish virtue, to destroy evil, to save the good I come from Yuga to Yuga.”

## ESSENTIALS OF HINDUISM

अवजानन्ति मां भूदां मानुषी' तनुमाश्रितम् ।

परं भावमजानन्तो मम भूतमहेश्वरम् ॥

"Fools deride Me who have assumed the human form, without knowing My real nature as the Lord of the universe." Such is Sri Krishna's declaration in the Gita on Incarnation. "When a huge tidal wave comes," says Bhagavān Sri Ramakrishna, "all the little brooks and ditches become full to the brim without any effort or consciousness on their own part ; so when an Incarnation comes, a tidal wave of spirituality breaks upon the world, and people feel spirituality almost full in the air."

### YOGA—THE MEANS

A religion, to satisfy the largest proportion of mankind, must be able to supply food for all types of minds ; and where this capability is wanting, the existing sects all become one-sided. Suppose you go to a sect which preaches love and emotion. They sing and weep, and preach love. But as soon as you say, "My friend, that is all right, but I want something stronger than this ; a little reason, and philosophy ; I want

to understand things step by step and more rationally," "Get out," they say, and they not only ask you to get out, but would send you to the other place, if they could. The result is, that that sect can only help people of an emotional turn of mind ; they not only do not help others, but try to destroy them ; and the most wicked part of the whole thing is, that they will not only *not* help others, but do not believe in their sincerity. Again, there are philosophers, who talk of the wisdom of India and the East and use big psychological terms, fifty syllables long, but if an ordinary man like me goes to them and says, "Can you tell me anything to make me spiritual?" the first thing they would do would be to smile and say "Oh you are too far below us in your reason. What can you understand about spirituality?" These are high-up philosophers. They simply show you the door. Then there are the mystical sects, who speak all sorts of things about different planes of existence, different states of mind, and what the power of the mind can do, and so on ; and if you are an ordinary man and say, "Show me anything good that I can do ; I am not much

given to speculation ; can you give me anything that will suit me ?" they will smile, and say, "Listen to that fool ; he knows nothing, his existence is for nothing." And this is going on everywhere in the world.

To become harmoniously balanced in all these four directions, is the ideal of religion. And this religion is attained by what we call Yoga—union. To the worker, it is union between men and the whole of humanity ; to the mystic, between his lower and Higher Self ; to the lover, union between himself and the God of love ; and to the philosopher, it is the union of *all* existence. This is what is meant by Yoga. This is a Sanskrit term, and these four divisions of Yoga have, in Sanskrit, different names. The man who seeks after this kind of union is called a Yogin. The worker is called the Karma-Yogin. He who seeks the union through love is called the Bhakti-Yogin. He who seeks it through mysticism is called the Rāja-Yogin. And he who seeks it through philosophy is called the Jñāna-Yogin. So this word Yogin comprises them all.



## ESSENTIALS OF HINDUISM

### RAJA-YOGA

Now first of all let me take up Raja-Yoga. What is this Raja-Yoga, this controlling of the mind? Ignorant people associate all sorts of hobgoblins with the word Yoga. I am afraid, therefore, I must start by telling you that it has nothing to do with such things. No one of these Yogas gives up reason, no one of them asks you to be hoodwinked, or to deliver your reason into the hands of priests of any type whatsoever. No one of them asks that you should give your allegiance to any super-human messenger. Each one of them tells you to *cling* to your reason, to hold fast to it. We find in all beings three sorts of instruments of knowledge. The first is instinct, which you find most highly developed in animals ; this is the lowest instrument of knowledge. What is the second instrument of knowledge? Reasoning. You find that most highly developed in man. Now in the first place, instinct is an inadequate instrument ; to animals, the sphere of action is very limited, and within that limit, instinct acts. When you came to man, you see it is largely

developed into reason. The sphere of action also has here become enlarged. Yet even reason is still very insufficient. Reason can go only a little way and then it stops, it cannot go any further ; and if you try to push it, the result is helpless confusion, reason itself becomes unreasonable. Logic becomes argument in a circle. Take for instance, the very basis of our perception, matter and force. What is matter ? That which is acted upon by force. And force ? That which acts upon matter. You see the complication, what the logicians call see-saw, one idea depending on the other, and this again depending on that. You find a mighty barrier before reason, beyond which reasoning cannot go ; yet it always feels impatient to get into the region of the Infinite Beyond. This world, this universe which our senses feel, or our mind thinks, is but one atom, so to say, of the Infinite, projected on to the plane of consciousness ; and within that narrow limit, defined by the network of consciousness, works our reason, and not beyond. Therefore, there must be some other instrument to take us beyond, and that instrument is called inspiration. So

instinct, reason, and inspiration are the three instruments of knowledge. Instinct belongs to animals, reason to men, and inspiration to God-men. But in all human beings are to be found, in a more or less developed condition, the germs of all these three instruments of knowledge. To have these mental instruments evolved, the germs must be there. And this must also be remembered, that one instrument is a development of the other, and therefore does not contradict it. It is reason that develops into inspiration, and therefore inspiration does not contradict reason, but fulfils it. Things which reason cannot get at, are brought to light by inspiration; and they do not contradict reason. The old man does not contradict the child, but fulfils the child. Therefore you must always bear in mind that the great danger lies in mistaking the lower form of instrument to be the higher. Many times instinct is presented before the world as inspiration, and then come all the spurious claims for the gift of prophecy. A fool or a semi-lunatic thinks that the confusion going on in his brain is inspiration, and he wants men to follow him. The

most contradictory, irrational nonsense that has been preached in the world, is simply the instinctive jargon of confused lunatic brains trying to pass for the language of inspiration.

The first test of true teaching must be, that the teaching should *not contradict reason*. And you may see that such is the basis of all these Yogas. We take the Raja-Yoga, the psychological Yoga, the psychological way to union. It is a vast subject, and I can only point out to you now the central idea of this Yoga. We have but one method of acquiring knowledge. From the lowest man to the highest Yogin, all have to use the same method ; and that method is what is called concentration. The chemist who works in his laboratory concentrates all the powers of his mind, brings them into one focus, and throws them on the elements ; and the elements stand analysed, and thus his knowledge comes. The astronomer has also concentrated the powers of his mind, and brought them into one focus ; and he throws them on to objects, through his telescope ; and stars and systems roll forward, and give up their secrets to him. So it is

in every case ; with the professor in his chair, the student with his book, with every man who is working to know. You are hearing me, and if my words interest you, your mind will become concentrated on them ; and then suppose a clock strikes, you will not hear it, on account of this concentration ; and the more you are able to concentrate your mind, the better you will understand me, and the more I concentrate my love and powers, the better I shall be able to give expression to what I want to convey to you. The more this power of concentration, the more knowledge is acquired, because this is the one and only method of acquiring knowledge. Even the lowest shoeblick, if he gives more concentration will black shoes better ; the cook with concentration will cook a meal all the better. In making money, or in worshipping God, or in doing anything, the stronger the power of concentration, the better will that thing be done. This is the one call, the one knock, which opens the gates of nature, and lets out floods of light. This, the power of concentration, is the only key to the treasure-house of

knowledge. The system of Raja-Yoga deals almost exclusively with this. In the present state of our body we are so much distracted, and the mind is frittering away its energies upon a hundred sorts of things. As soon as I try to calm my thoughts, and concentrate my mind upon any one object of knowledge, thousands of undesired impulses rush into the brain, thousands of thoughts rush into the mind and disturb it. How to check it and bring the mind under control is the whole subject of study in Raja-Yoga.

#### KARMA-YOGA

Now take Karma-Yoga, the attainment of God through work. It is evident that in society there are many persons who seem to be born for some sort of activity or other, whose minds cannot be concentrated on the plane of thought alone, and who have but one idea, concretised in work, visible and tangible. There must be a science for this kind of life too. Each one of us is engaged in some work, but the majority of us fritter away the greater portion of our energies, because we do not know the secret of work. Karma-Yoga explains this secret and teaches

where and how to work, how to employ to the greatest advantage the largest part of our energies in the work that is before us. But with this secret we must take into consideration the great objection against work, namely, that it causes pain. All misery and pain come from attachment. I want to do work, I want to do good to a human being: and it is ninety to one that that human being, whom I have helped, will prove ungrateful, and go against me; and the result to me is pain. Such things deter mankind from working; and it spoils a good portion of the work and energy of the mankind, this fear of pain and misery. Karma-Yoga teaches us how to work for work's sake, unattached, without caring who is helped, and what for. The Karma-Yogin works because it is his nature because he *feels* that it is good for him to do so, and he has no object beyond that. His position in this world is that of a giver, and he never cares to receive anything. He knows that he is giving, and does not ask for anything in return and therefore he eludes the grasp of misery. The grasp of pain, whenever it comes, is the result of the reaction of "attachment."

## ESSENTIALS OF HINDUISM

### BHAKTI-YOGA

There is then the Bhakti-Yoga for the man of emotional nature, the lover. He wants to love God, he relies upon and uses all sorts of rituals, flowers, incense, beautiful buildings, forms, and all such things. Do you mean to say they are wrong? - One fact I must tell you. It is good for you to remember that the world's great spiritual giants have all been produced only by those religious sects which have been in possession of very rich mythology and ritual. All sects that have attempted to worship God without any form or ceremony, have crushed without mercy everything that is beautiful and sublime in religion. Their religion is a fanaticism at best, a dry thing. The history of the world is a standing witness to this fact. Therefore do not decry these rituals and mythologies. Let people have them; let those, who so desire have them. Do not exhibit that unworthy derisive smile, and say, "They are fools; let them have it." Not so; the greatest men I have seen in my life, the most wonderfully-developed in spirituality, have all come



through the discipline of these rituals. I do not hold myself worthy to sit at their feet, and for *me* to criticise *them* ! How do I know how these ideas act upon the human mind, which of them I am to accept and which to reject ? We are apt to criticise everything in the world without sufficient warrant. Let people have all the mythology they want, with its beautiful inspirations ; for you must always bear in mind that emotional natures do not care for abstract definitions of the truth. God to them is something tangible, the only thing that is real ; they feel, hear and see Him and love Him. Let them have their God. Your rationalist seems to them to be like the fool who, when he saw a beautiful statue, wanted to break it to find out of what material it was made. Bhakti-Yoga teaches them how to love, without any ulterior motives, loving God and loving the good because it is good to do so, not for going to heaven, nor to get children, wealth, or anything else. It teaches them that love itself is the highest recompense of love—that God Himself is love.

It teaches them to pay all kinds of

tributes to God as the Creator, the Omnipresent, Omniscient, Almighty Ruler, the Father and the Mother. The highest phrase that can express Him, the highest idea that the human mind can conceive of Him, is, that He is the God of Love. Wherever there is love, it is He. "Wherever there is any love, it is He, the Lord is present there." *Where the husband kisses the wife, He is there in the kiss ; where the mother kisses the child, He is there in the kiss ; where friends clasp hands, He, the Lord, is present as the God of Love.* When a great man loves and wishes to help mankind, He is there giving freely His bounty out of His love to mankind. Wherever the heart expands, He is there manifested. This is what the Bhakti-Yoga teaches.

### JNANA-YOGA

We lastly come to the Jnana-Yogin, the philosopher, the thinker, he who wants to go beyond the visible. He is the man who is not satisfied with the little things of this world. His idea is to go beyond the daily routine of eating, drinking, and so on ; not even the teaching of thousands of books

will satisfy him. Not even all the sciences will satisfy him ; at the best, they only bring this little world before him. What else will give him satisfaction ? Not even myriads of systems of worlds will satisfy him ; they are to him but a drop in the ocean of existence. His soul wants to go beyond all that into the very heart of being, by seeing Reality as It is ; by realising It, by being It, by becoming one with that Universal Being. That is the philosopher. To say that God is the Father or the Mother, the Creator of this universe, its Protector, and Guide, is to him, quite inadequate to express Him. To him, God is the life of his life, the soul of his soul. God is his own Self. Nothing else remains which is other than God. All the mortal parts of him become pounded by the weighty strokes of philosophy, and are brushed away. What at last truly remains, is God Himself.

Upon the same tree there are two birds, one on the top, the other below. The one on the top is calm, silent and majestic, immersed in its own glory ; the one on the lower branches, eating sweet and bitter fruits by turns, hopping from branch to

branch is becoming happy and miserable by turns. After a time the lower bird eats an exceptionally bitter fruit, and gets disgusted and looks up and sees the other bird, that wondrous one of golden plumage, who eats neither sweet nor bitter fruit, who is neither happy nor miserable, but calm, Self-centred and sees nothing beyond his Self. The lower bird longs for this condition but soon forgets it, and again begins to eat the fruit. In a little while, he eats another exceptionally bitter fruit, which makes him feel miserable, and he again looks up, and tries to get nearer to the upper bird. Once more he forgets and after a time he looks up, and so on he goes again and again, until he comes very near to the beautiful bird and sees the reflection of light from his plumage playing around his own body, and he feels a change and seems to melt away ; still nearer he comes, and everything about him melts away, and at last he understands this wonderful change. The lower bird was, as it were, only the substantial-looking shadow, the reflection of the higher ; he himself was in essence the upper bird all the time. This eating of fruits, sweet and

bitter, this lower, little bird, weeping and happy by turns, was a vain chimera, a dream ; all along, the real bird was there above, calm and silent, glorious and majestic, beyond grief, beyond sorrow. The upper bird is God, the Lord of this universe ; and the lower bird is the human soul, eating the sweet and bitter fruits of this world. Now and then comes a heavy blow to the soul. For a time, he stops the eating and goes towards the unknown God, and a flood of light comes. He thinks that this world is a vain show. Yet again the senses drag him down and he begins as before, to eat the sweet and bitter fruits of the world. Again an exceptionally hard blow comes. His heart becomes open again to divine light ; thus gradually he approaches God, and as he gets nearer and nearer, he finds his old self melting away. When he has come near enough he sees that he is no other than God, and he exclaims, "He whom I have described to you as the Life of this universe, as present in the atom, and in suns and moons—He is the basis of our own life, the Soul of our soul. Nay, thou art That." This is what this Jnana-Yoga teaches. It

## ESSENTIALS OF HINDUISM

tells man that he is essentially divine. It shows to mankind the real unity of being, and that each one of us is the Lord God Himself, manifested on earth. All of us, from the lowest worm that crawls under our feet to the highest beings to whom we look up with wonder and awe, all are manifestations of the same Lord.

### . THE GOAL

Lastly, it is imperative that all these various Yogas should be carried out in practice ; mere theories about them will not do any good. First we have to hear about them, then we have to think about them. We have to reason the thoughts out, impress them on our minds, and we have to meditate on them realise them until at last, they become our whole life. No longer will religion remain a bundle of ideas or theories, nor an intellectual assent ; it will enter into our very self. By means of intellectual assent we may to-day subscribe to many foolish things, and change our minds altogether to-morrow. But true religion never changes. Religion is realisation ; not talk, nor doctrine, nor theories, however

## ESSENTIALS OF HINDUISM

beautiful they may be. It is being and becoming, not hearing or acknowledging but, it is the whole soul becoming changed into what it believes. That is religion.

